



## Be careful and live on “Drive Safer Sunday”

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My rear view mirror has turned into a time machine. Every now and then, when I glance into it, I see my son Cullum backing out of our driveway, waving one last time as he pulls away. Then, the truth comes crashing home again: I’m still here, and he’s not.

The Sunday after Thanksgiving will be a hard day for us again this year. It marks the sixth anniversary of Cullum’s tragic, violent passing. He was a young man of 22 with great promise whose life was ended in its prime, without warning, on the Sunday after Thanksgiving in 2002, the busiest highway traffic day of the year. Stopped in an interstate traffic jam while headed back to school in Virginia with his younger brother, Pierce, Cullum saw the lights of the speeding tractor trailer rig in *his* rear view mirrors. As he was trying to get the car over to the left median to get out of the way, the big rig speeding on cruise control crashed into the boys’ car with full force, crushing it like a toy. That night, we got the phone call every parent dreads and will remember with horror for the rest of our lives: Pierce, who miraculously had survived, told us through his tears from the ambulance that Cullum had been killed.

My wife, Susan, Pierce and I will never stop asking the question *why Cullum?* However, we believe we have found answers to the many questions about why and how that wreck and thousands more heavy truck-car crashes happen each year. In an effort to learn all we could and then to educate motorists and big rig drivers about the inherent dangers for everyone when heavy commercial trucks travel at high speeds, we founded the non-profit Road Safe America in 2003.

This Sunday will be the fourth annual national observance of Drive Safer Sunday in America, a day for which we have had state, congressional and media support for a national campaign urging everyone to drive more safely on the busiest highway traffic day of the year.

Since founding Road Safe America ([www.roadsafeamerica.org](http://www.roadsafeamerica.org)), we have been joined by the American Trucking Associations, all national safety advocacy organizations, numerous trucking firms, business executives, insurance companies and thousands of citizens in seeking a national regulation requiring activation of electronic speed limiting governors on all trucks 13 tons and up built after 1992. All trucks built since 1992 already come with the speed governors installed, so it would be a simple thing to activate them. Oddly, the Bush Administration has opposed this common sense, inexpensive regulation that would save many of the lives of approximately 4,000 motorists and 1,000 truckers killed each year in crashes involving big trucks. We have asked President-Elect Barack Obama to be more compassionate, and we hope his administration will appoint a Secretary of Transportation who takes action.

If saving lives is not motivation enough to support this cause, in this era of dependency on foreign sources of oil, consider the fact that activation of speed governing technology is already done by many trucking firms as a way to cut fuel use as well as improve safety. With a reduction of only 5 mph, millions of gallons of fuel can be saved annually in the nation's trucking fleet.

The European Union, Australia, Japan and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec have regulations requiring speed limiting devices set well at 65 mph or slower on all large trucks. Sadly, instead of showing international leadership, the U.S. is behind the rest of the world in this area.

According to Australian government statistics, Australia experienced a reduction of 26.5 percent in heavy truck fatalities between 2002 and 2004 through speed governor requirements, aggressive fatigue management programs, random drug testing and seatbelt promotion within the trucking industry.

When an airliner goes down and 200 people perish, it is national news for weeks. But when twice that many are killed every month in crashes involving big trucks, where is the outcry?

No one at Road Safe America is anti-trucking or anti-trucker. In fact, the opposite is the case. In terms of annual deaths and injuries, trucking is the most dangerous profession in America, and we want to change that. We are trying to educate drivers of passenger autos and other vehicles about the need to operate more safely around large trucks because of the dangers present. Trucking is an absolutely vital industry to the economic health and prosperity of our nation. However, by limiting heavy commercial trucks' maximum speeds, we know that many more drivers will make it home to their families at the end of a long run, and more motorists will live to see their loved ones again as well – this Sunday and for many Sundays to come.